

Hearing on Inspector General Legislation

July 19, 2000

This morning the Governmental Affairs Committee is holding a hearing on two legislative proposals relating to agency inspectors general. The IGs are the front-line troops in combating fraud, waste, and abuse and improving the performance of federal agencies. A report released last week revealed that actions by IGs resulted in the recovery of \$4 billion in misspent funds last year and identified another \$8.2 billion in additional savings. The report also revealed that IG investigations resulted in more than 13,000 successful prosecutions and 1,200 civil actions.

Inspectors general also are an important resource for Congressional oversight. This Committee has come to rely on them more and more. For example, IGs regularly update us on the “top 10” most serious management problems facing their agencies. In fact, we just reported a bill that makes these top 10 reports statutory. Likewise, the IGs have been a great help to us in assessing their agencies’ implementation of the Government Performance and Results Act.

Today we will consider two legislative proposals designed to help make the inspectors general even more effective. One is S. 870, a bill introduced by Senator Collins last year, that would make a number of amendments to the Inspector General Act of 1978. The other is an Administration proposal to grant permanent law enforcement authority to some IGs.

Senator Collins’ bill would establish a nine-year term of office for IGs; require periodic external management reviews of their operations; and change the current IG semiannual reports to annual reports. In addition, it would prohibit IGs from receiving cash awards from their agencies; raise the pay level of presidentially-appointed IGs; and consolidate some of the smaller IG offices.

The Administration proposal would authorize the Attorney General to delegate to presidentially-

appointed IGs and their investigators permanent authority to carry firearms, to make arrests without warrant in appropriate circumstances, and to seek and execute search warrants. They currently exercise these authorities under temporary deputations from the U.S. Marshals Service. The IGs would be required to establish an external review process to ensure adequate safeguards and management procedures over the exercise of these authorities.

I look forward to exploring at today's hearing how we can strengthen the IGs and improve their operations.